

**Abstract:**

A method and system for quickly informing a backup unit that a primary unit has failed. Normally an exception handler is activated when a software failure occurs  
5 and network controller chips or the ASIC interface to a signal bus can operate even though there is a software failure. A software failure notification packet is programmed and stored in a location that is not affected by a software system failure. When a software failure occurs, control is shifted to the exception handler. The exception handler sends a pre-established and pre-addressed  
10 packet to the network controller card which transmits this packet to the backup unit. Upon receipt of the packet, the backup unit goes into operation. In some alternate embodiments that include multiple line cards in a single unit, the exception handler sends a signal to a backup unit via a signal bus or a data bus.